DEDICATED TO ALL SOUTH EDMONTON PIONEERS

IN MEMORY OF

MY PARENTS

MR. AND MRS. D. L. CAMPBELL.

by ZOLA ISABELL CAMPBELL.

I have written this tale of the early years
For all our South Edmonton pioneers
Who would like to preserve a record in verse
Of how they accepted for better or worse
The ups and the downs of fortune and weather
When they and the west were young together,
As seen through the eyes, as I ought to state,
Of a teen-age tenderfoot of ninety-eight.
Although with this record I seem to entwine
A rather full history of me and mine,
You will see it is really a story in rhyme
Of a typical family of that time.
Now let me say between you and me
I know that my verse isn't poetry.
Its sameness is tiresome and you will find
If you happen to have a critical mind,
The meter dependent on matter or mood,
The rhythm uneven, the rhyming oft crude.
In fact I have rather relished the crime
Of using at time a low brow rhyme
That would make you see in the wink of an eye
Some scene enacted in the days gone by.
But now let me say without further ado,
"South Edmonton pioneers, here's to you!
All to all of the pioneers of the west,
Many of whom have gone to their rest."

It was in the spring of the year ninety-eight
A very important historical date -
That I was brought out these many long miles
From where I had parked all my maiden smiles,
To this small burg with its tri-weekly mail,
This jumping off place for the Klondyke trail.
When we had arrived at our journey's end
In the wee small hours, no welcoming friend
Awaited us here and the word got around
That the town was full - no rooms to be found.
So, knowing not where we might be housed,
We shouldered the wee 'uns from sleep aroused,
And, bearing our luggage, with weary tread
We trudged up the street to find us a bed.
But we were luckier than we knew,
For we found a suite with a Maine Street view
In the Klondyke Lodging House, no less -
A picturesque spot, as you might guess.
But the genial host was exceedingly kind,
For the rooms to which we were assigned
Were really his own - just finished that day.
The blankets were new but a very dark gray,
And the bunks were of lumber, unplaned but new.
From the gunny sack mattress the hay peeked through.
The Slumber King spring had resigned his throne,
Leaving the Ostermoor reigning alone;
But with spring all about, as some one said,
What need had we of one in our bed.

Next day we went searching all up and down
The muddy streets of this old south town;
NO furnished rooms! No house! No shack!
So I foolishly hoped that we might go back.
But we found a wee shack at long and at last
At the close of the day when hope seemed past:-
Unpainted, unplastered and much undersized.
And we moved right im as we were advised.
Our household goods were on the way
And they might arrive most any day.
The town was o'er flowing, we were told
With those who were planning to go after gold.
They were buying their dogs, their sleds and loads,
And soon they would take to the open roads.
But now they were walking around in the slush
Until time to start off on the "Klondyke Rush."
Then too there were many queer men about,
With their sheepskin coats turned inside out;
While the women wore theirs turned outside in,
With head handkerchiefs tied under the chin,
And wide gathered skirts and high top boots.
And every train brought other recruits.
They were nearly all waiting the word to go
When the land would be cleared of a recent snow.
But beside all these people who came and went
There were many who seemed to be well content
To stay right here their whole lives through,
And they said we would get to like it too.

Did I like it then? Decidedly, not!
And never would either, or so I then thought.
I hated the mud, the sloughs, the coyotes calls,
The unplastered shack with mice in its walls,
The wee dark stores on the town's best streets,
The lack of good sidewalks under our feet.
One block of sidewalk was all that we had,
One block for our daily promenade.
I missed the big city's bustle and noise,
The friends who had shared my sorrows and joys
The far away home that I long had known,
Where things had places of their own,
Instead of being deep down in trunks,
And beds were beds and never bunks,
Our new found friends were worthy the name,
They were kind and good but just the same
I hated to hear them by day and by night
Keep bragging to us of the prospects bright.
They came to our house both early and late,
And oh, how they loved to reiterate -
That optimistic pioneer band -
The attractions of this, their promised land.
And I had to listen to all that they said,
As I looked at the stars from the loft o'erhead.
While I fervently wished we were all back home
They bragged of the soil, that deep, rich loam,
Of the lovely weather, the nice sunny clime,
And the fine cool nights of the summer time.

"The wind never blows", they would solemnly say
Nor worry a bit if it blew the next day.
And somebody sure would be telling soon
That all the rains come in the month of June,
And stock feed out the whole year through
And undertakers have nothing to do
And you're always sleepy and ready to eat
And mosquitoes bite only the tenderfeet
And goods would be cheap and stocks up to date,
If it weren't for that ogre which they called freight.
And thereby a riddle, so strange but true
Which I shall proceed to be asking you.
I went to a store a wee sponge to buy
And asked to be told why the price was high.
"Because of the freight," he answered me.
Now which was soused? Was the sponge or he?
Whenever old-timers got together
They always talked of the crops and the weather.
And if they were cold they would conceal it
As they gravely assured us, "You never feel it".
For whatever the weather they always conceded
It was just the thing the country needed.
They bragged of the size of the farmer's fields
And dwelt at length on the soil's big yields:
They spoke of the height of the garden crops
And bade you to note the potato tops,
And early in June when a bad frost came
They went on bragging just the same.

They said those tops were far too high.
It was just what they needed to wilt and die-
That the crop would be better because of the blight,
(And the worst of it was they seemed to be right.)
They talked of the gold in the river's sands,
So easily garnered by willing hands.
They bragged of the vast deposits of coal
And dared you to discover a "better 'ole."
Then orators sprang up like prairie flowers
All ready to talk for hours and hours
With fluttering hands and glowing faces
Of all thoseglorious wide open spaces
That lay in wait, as with outstretched hands,
For the homeless people of all the lands.
And after a time we all learned to know
Just when they would pause a moment or so
And ask you to list to the distant hum
Of the millions of settlers yet to come.
Then, leaving us there to count the tally,
Would sweep along to the grande finale,
When they spoke to us with a solemn air,
In lowered tones, of the privilege rare,
Of lending a hand, of having a share
In digging and laying true and four square
Foundations for this last best west,
Foundations that would stand the test,
That, stone by stone, and tier by tier,
This far-flung bit of empire here

Might rise in beauty through the years-
A monument to our pioneers.
We heard such speeches o'er and o'er,
Beside the stove in the country store,
At picnics and concerts, in public squares,
From platforms and pulpits, at meetings and fairs.
And especially orators from the east,
(Who expected to stay for a day at least)
Would set their audiences all astir
As they told us all how lucky we were.
"You're telling us! Now ain't that queer,"
Might have been the reply of the pioneer.
"That's what you think! Lucky, my eye!"
Would have suited a tenderfoot such as I;
But we hadn't heard those sayings then,
When the west was young. Ah, woeful when!
Nor did they need them, that pioneer crew,
In order the subject to further pursue.
As compared with them, those eastern boosters
Were about as effective as bantam roosters.
Oh, yes they were boosters, our pioneers
Away, way back in those early years.
But yet, to the tenderfoot they were kind,
Although there were laws which he had to mind.
He must do as the Romans do in Rome,
And not keep harping on 'Ome sweet 'Ome.
They gave him so long to dry out his wings,
To sort of get on to the hang of things,

And then if he still was feeling "high hat",
He could jump in the lake and that was that.
But most of the folk who came here to stay
Soon took to the life in a wonderful way.
Though gathered here from all the world's lanes
They mostly had pioneer blood in their veins;
And so you would find, in maybe a year,
The tenderfoot turned to a pioneer.
If you heard him telling some raw recruit,
"No, the wind never blows!" nor giving a hoot
If his hat blew off in a sudden gale
Before he had finished his windy tale.
You would know he had passed his pioneer test
And was fit to be numbered along with the rest.
But hardships were many and luxuries few,
Yes, very few, I am telling you;
For things as necessities, now defined
Were then to the luxury list assigned.
So fathers worked hard on simple fare,
And mothers on tinfoil rolled their hair,
Which makes them impatient now no doubt,
(As they think of the things they did without.)
With the agitator on relief
Who demands his caviar as well as beef,
And his wife her regular permanent,
As well as food and clothes and rent.
(With no reflections intended or made
On honest folk in need of aid.)

But now once more I must take you back
To that ugly unfinished, unfurnished, shack,
Unplastered, unpainted, un-everything,
To which we moved that night in the spring.
Strangers we were and all unprepared
For the hardships that all old-timers shared.
But our neighbors, bless them! were neighbors indeed
And only too pleased to serve our need.
One lent us a table and one some chairs
And one a wee bench that was given to airs:
For, unless we would sit on the seat just so,
In spite of our yells over backward we'd go.
Thus we managed to live for a week or two
Till our household effects at last came through.
Our first summer here on the whole was dry
And they called it hot, - We didn't see why.
For hot was hot, where we came from,
So we waited all summer for summer to come,
And we waited all night for the day to end
For the twilight to come and darkness descend.
When early in May, three days in a row
There came a heavy fall of snow,
Just after the ground was newly seeded,
We decided to take the next day's train
Until we heard that old time refrain,
"It's just the thing the country needed."
The June rains came as they said they would,
But a frost came too which wasn't so good.

The fall was lovely we had to agree
With skies every day as blue as could be
And the trees in the valley, in wine and jade,
A resplendent regiment on parade.
The winter was tardy a bit that year
And when it came, not very severe.
We moved to a house in the early fall,
And really it wasn't too bad at all.
With our goodsunpacked from barrel and crate
At last we had room to circulate.
With our straw lined carpets tacked to the floors,
And white lace curtains at windows and doors,
With a cloth on the table, a shine on the stove,
And geranium slips in the front alcove,
With mother all dressed in her black silk gown
When the callers came from country and town,
The year ambled by as e'en first years will
And while we were often quite homesick, still
We were feeling better and learned to know
That you find fine folk wherever you go.

The Church.

We started to Knox when first we came.
Which was Presbyterian then by name.
I went to Sunday School as well as church.
And to Christian Endeavor for further research.
The church was homey and neat, though small,
With coal-oil lamps adorning each wall.
With a nice red carpet on pulpit and stairs,
A pulpit desk and some red plush chairs.

Now the church was crowded the whole year through
As longer and longer the church roll grew.
So you had to go early or else you would find
They would march you up front nor say, "Do you mind?"
They would march you up front, your cheeks on fire,
To those seats running lengthwise adjoining the choir.
But all this belongs to a different rhyme
Which I may finish some other time.

The School

In the early fall when the school began,
Reluctantly, I joined the school going clan.
A four room schoolhouse of brick veneer
Was the home of the Public and High that year.
One teacher and only one room for the High,
Which caused me many a homesick sigh,
For the school where I had hoped to matriculate,
Was once the Capitol Building of the state.
It was set in a lovely parklike square.
Was four stories high with a circular stair.
No wonder I grieved at the radical change.
The curriculum also to me was strange.
To the choice of one's course one gave no thought,
For the teacher's course was the only one taught -
Three classes with fifteen subjects each
And only one teacher those subjects to teach.
Then, as to the lab, we had nary a thing
But a magnet, a pith ball and a silk string.
And yet our record was one of the best
Of all the schools of the whole North West.

You may attribute that as you will
To the pupil's brains or the teacher's skill.

Sights and Scenes.

Of course there were interesting sights and scenes
In those pioneer days for folk in their teams.
In the early spring ere the snow had gone
On the river flats there were races on,
When the Klondyke hikers trained their dogs,
All fitted out in their sourdough togs.
And someone was always washing for gold
On the banks of the river in days of old.
The old log fort on the north side hill
Was standing then (as it should be still),
And Walter's mill on the southern side,
While the ferries that backward and forward plied,
In summertime were the only bond
Twixt the north side town and the world beyond.
When first we came to this promised land
No bridges, then, our river spanned,
Through workmen were busily laying the piers
Of the Low Level Bridge of later years,
Which had to be raised by six feet or so
After the big ninety-nine overflow.
Of course on the twenty-fourth day of May
The schoolchildren threatened to run away
Unless they were given a holiday,
And the Indians came to town for a stay.
They camped all along the Old Calgary Trail -
The young and the old, the strong and the frail,

With squaw and brave and little papoose,
With cart and tepee, dogs and cayouse.
And every night to the tom-tom's beat
They would grunt and dance on the town's best street.
In the summertime when the fairs came along
You always would see a picturesque throng
Of Indians looking solemn and grim
And mounted policemen, dapper and trim,
What a wonderful sight was the mountie, too
On his noble steed in scarlet and blue.
The cowboy also would be on hand,
And folk from many a far off land
In native costumes fashioned with care -
A colorful scene was the old Edmonton Fair.
In the winter time in the pioneer days,
Instead of cars we had cutters and sleighs
And many jumpers, some trim and neat,
While others beside them on the street
Were constructed of boxes that once held soap,
And drawn by oxen with harness of rope.
In the summertime the roads were lined
With democrats of every kind,
Red River carts and a motley crew
Of wagons and buggies old and new.
And horses there were of every breed
From a shaggy cayouse to a mountie's steed.
But very few horses of today
Are talked of more than was Hulbert's gray

And no conveyance at any resort
Compares with that turnout from The Fort.
No wonder we gazed as it passed us by
With the narrow democrat shiny and high,
The proudly stepping and satiny team,
With their silvery harness all agleam,
And the mountie moguls, grand and proud,
Unmindful (?) of the admiring crowd.
Then worthy too of a place in our song
Was that stately vehicle low and long,
That lovely carriage a la mode,
In which the lordly nobles rode,
With its fourhorse team so tightly reined,
And the liveried coachman that appertained.
Remember our four-horse tally-ho
That took us where we wished to go,
To concerts or picnics or anywhere
When the urge for fun was in the air.

Social Phase

And now we come to the social phase
Of life in the west in the early days.
There were tennis and ball games then as now,
And once in a while a neighborhood row.
There were dances for those who wished to dance,
And I suppose there were games of chance.
But, as I recall those days, I think
That our home, our school, our church and the rink
Were each in themselves a central sun
Around which circled our teen-age fun.

Church socials and concerts, plays and teas,
And at Christmas time our Christmas Trees
Were all of them held in old Ross Hall
Where many good times were had by all
With "Jacob and Rachel" and "Musical Chairs".
With promenades or marching in pairs,
With puzzles and games to make you think,
And, oh boy, how some folks could wink!
I remember one play, "The Temple of Fame,"
With local artists producing the same.
Now that was a play that was up to date,
With beautiful ladies in dresses to mate,
With quarreling stars and all of the rest
That are found in companies of the best.
Fine concerts we had in old Ross Hall
And many great artists came there to call;-
"Pauline Johnson, Ben Gough and Gavin Spence,
And Jessie MacLaughlin - wasn't she immense,
Wi' her "Hunnered Pipers and A' and A',"
And, shoot man, did she no look braw!
As to her singing, the oldtimers tell
That her voice was heard as clear as a bell
Right down to the corner of Maine and Whyte,
When she sang in Knox that summer night.
We had artists too of our very own,
Whose names and talents were then well known,
And the popular hits of the pioneers
Are often still heard in these later years.

But the favorite songs that then were sung
Were the songs that were old when we were young.
We had a few picnics now and again
In spite of mosquitoes, and hail and rain,
And when we wished for a change of scene
We rode out or drove to some nearby ravine-
Whyte Mud or Black, Mill creek or Groat,
And sometimes we boarded Walter's Boat
And went for a daylight or moonlight cruise
In picnic parties or just by twos.
But if we wished to put on some style
We went down to Jeff to camp for a while,
Or sometimes we journeyed to Aspen Beach.
If neither of these was within our reach
To Whyte Mud or Black Mud or Sandy Lake
With tents and provisions our way we would take.
Alberta, Cabs and Cooking, strange to say
Were almost unknown in my young day.
Now the half of this tale would not be told
If I left out one famous place of old.
You talk about your onuous rings
Where you pick your leaders and settle things.
You talk about your paper debates
Like "The Sinking Fun", versus "The Rotes,"
We didn't need those in days of yore
When the old guard met in Hulbert's store
To read "The Mail and Empire" and "The Globe"
And all the affairs of state to probe,

To discuss the late news from Ladysmith,
Or whom so and so was going with,
Or the respective merits of Laurier,
Or Tupper of Foster or Sir John A.
I suppose there was also much talk about
Those sheepskin coats turned inside out,
And oft they would speak of real estate,
And likewise of prices, especially freight,
While those who returned from the Klondyke hike
Would doubtless each tell of some lucky strike,
But the subject to enkindle the hottest flame
Would certainly be the last hockey game.
The rink was uncovered in ninety-eight.
The covered was built at a later date.
And many whose heads are now turning grey
Were grand march leaders in their day.
That covered rink was our pride and joy
But, at hockey matches, then, Oh boy!
The place became just a boxing ring
An Irish fair or some such thing,
Especially when we went out to play
The north side town on a Christmas day.
Our team was composed of brothers and sons,
And oh, how we hated old Edmonton's.
I remember the season, beginning nought two
When we were victorious nearly all through.
The north side boys were good, I suppose,
But, sakes alive! They were mortal foes
And oh how we grinned when they couldn't keep tab

Of those longlegged fellows, Harold and Ab.
I remember one night when, like Billy the Norman;
Bringing a referee called Mr.----------
They came o'er the water to do or to die,
And the fat was sure in the fire to fry,
When he seemed to favor his own home town.
In a second the fans had all swooped down
To fight it out on the ice below.
Then the referee thought it was time to go.
So he started off for his bus near by,
Pursued by a crowd of the younger fry.
'Twas late in the season- gone was the snow.
Vainly they looked for something to throw.
Then each of them seemed with one accord
To remember his precious marble horde.
So away went many a marble and alley
In a very exciting last minute rally.
Disgraceful, you say, Yes, yes, I suppose;
But, without the movies and radios
They couldn't buy the big fights canned,
Now could they view them second hand.

**The Conclusion.**

**But now ere I bring to a close this lay**
**Of events and scenes of an earlier day,**
**I'll ask you to join me if you will,**
**As we go to the top of the river hill;**
**For our river vale, just like a vast stage**
**Has depicted the changes from age to age,**

As well as the seasons that come and go,
The sunrise scenes and the sunset's glow.
But come with me now and let us look down
From the river bank of the old south town
On that amphitheater there in the vale
And see, enacted the stirring tale
Of trappers, explorers; Of Blackfeet and Crees,
Bringing their furs to the companies,
At their often moved and rival posts,
Whose well trained factors acted as hosts;
The permanent fort with its palisade;
The barges that formed the York Brigade;
The steamers, those river troubadours,
That journeyed here from far off shores;
The ferries that travelled over and back;
The races run on the old race track;
The volunteers brave who guarded the gate
Till the regular troops arrived in state;
The mounties on horseback riding by,
Or in their democrat shiny and high-
Efficient, resourceful, brave and cool;
The very first churches; the very first school;
The stages and buses and tallyho,
And that four-horse carriage long and low;
The homeseekers wagons, climbing the hills;
The logs floating down to the lumber mills;
The big gold dredges seeking to wrest
The river's gold from its watery nest;

The panners, preferring the simpler way,
And reaping their small awards each day;
The Klondyke hikers drilling their teams;
Preparing to leave for northern streams;
The Low Level Bridge; the flood; the trains;
The Boer War soldiers there on the plains;
The rousing games on the open squares;
The very colorful old time fairs;
The picnic parties from both the towns;
The pleasure boats, their ups and downs;
The great historical celebration; -
"The grand Provincial Inauguration;
The steps that served to shorten the climb;
The "Lift" that lasted so short a time;
The Capitol Building, being erected;
The historical Fort, torn down - rejected;
The yearly drowning tragedies;
Those motor boat fatalities;
The street cars starting on their rounds;
The gala scenes on the Parliament grounds;
The 'Varsity Buildings - of learning the seat;
The High Level Bridge - an accomplished feat;
The second flood - the trouble it made;
The Great War soldiers on parade.

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But here I will turn from the scenes in the vale,
And leave all the rest of the moving tale
To my successors, the younger rhymers,
And now I say "Farewell, old timers!"